



**DEPARTMENT OF LAND
AND NATURAL RESOURCES**



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

News Release

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CHEVRON HAWAII REFINERY SEEKS “SAFE HARBOR” STATUS FOR ENDANGERED WATERBIRDS

Public hearing on proposed agreement scheduled Sept. 21

HONOLULU — Since 1992, Chevron Hawaii has been working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect and manage a population of the endangered Hawaiian stilt and Hawaiian coot at the James Campbell Industrial Park refinery.

Now they will be joined by the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife, as they propose to place a “safe harbor” umbrella over the project to formalize the arrangement for another 6 years.

A public hearing on the proposed “safe harbor agreement” will be held by DLNR at Asing Park, ‘Ewa Beach on September 21 from 7 to 9 p.m.

“This agreement is yet another great example of a partnership with a private landowner to help recover our state’s endangered species,” said Young, Chairperson of the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

“Partnerships with private landowners are critical to our ability to restore and protect the state’s natural resources, and Safe Harbor Agreements provide landowners the assurance that they will not be penalized by additional endangered species restrictions at some point in the future as a result of their efforts,” he said.

“We are also joining this partnership because the restoration and management of this watershed offers excellent opportunities for collaboration with our agency partners,” said Young.

(more)

For example, DLNR is working with various partners to restore the 70-acre Pouhala Marsh located approximately 8 miles northeast of the Chevron Refinery. Efforts to restore the marsh are expected to be complete by the time this agreement expires.

Jeff Newman, acting field supervisor for the Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, said, "We cannot only look to state and federal agencies to help Hawaii's endangered and threatened species, but we must reach out and work together with private landowners to conserve the unique habitats and wildlife found throughout the islands."

"Chevron Hawaii is a good example of different entities coming together to face one common goal: the protection and recovery of two endangered wetland birds," Newman said.

During the term of the six-year Safe Harbor Agreement, Chevron will maintain 6 acres of stilt nesting habitat and 5 acres of habitat for stilt and coot foraging at the Refinery's open-water ponds, which are surrounded by tanks that store crude oil and petroleum products.

The pond, named after the refinery's first plant manager, is fed by storm water runoff and clean, treated water from the plant. In 1992, attracted by the natural microbes and algae in the pond, significant numbers of stilts and coots began arriving and nesting at the refinery.

Working closely with federal biologists, Chevron Hawaii began managing the site to benefit the endangered stilts and coots.

Since then, more than 360 Hawaiian stilts and 12 Hawaiian coot chicks have fledged at the refinery. Approximately 14 to 51 stilts and up to 9 coots fledge each year at the site.

The total population of Hawaiian stilts statewide is estimated to be between 1,200 and 1,600 individuals. It is believed that as many as 230 of the 360 Hawaiian stilts produced at the site may have reached adulthood, representing a 15 to 19% increase of the total population.

Chevron will manage the water level and vegetation in Rowland's Pond to maximize nesting habitat, and conduct predator control around Rowland's Pond and several other pond areas within the Refinery to provide additional foraging habitat.

Chevron has committed to monitor the stilts and coots occurring on their property and implement adaptive management strategies should current management activities appear ineffective.

Pond areas within the refinery are not managed to create permanent populations of stilts or coots, but rather to provide temporary habitat that will help maintain and increase populations until other natural wetland areas are protected, restored, and managed.

Through the years most of Hawaii's wetlands have been drained and filled in as a result of agricultural, residential, and industrial development.

In addition, wetland birds have suffered greatly from over-hunting and the introduction of invasive species such as cats, dogs, mongooses, and rats. The ever increasing loss of native wetland habitat led the stilts and coots to the catchment basin known as "Rowland's Pond," located near the southeast corner of the refinery .

Safe Harbor Agreements offer assurances to private and other non-federal property owners who implement conservation efforts for listed species. The assurances state that property owners will not be subjected to increased property use restrictions if their efforts attract listed species or increase the numbers or distribution of listed species already on their property.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have published notices in the Office of Environmental Quality Control's Environmental Notice and in the Federal Register offering the public the opportunity to review and comment on the agreement and associated documents.

The agreement and other associated documents are available at the Hawaii State Main Library, the Kapolei Public Library, the Division of Forestry and Wildlife office in Honolulu (587-0166), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in Honolulu (792-9400), and online at <http://www.state.hi.us/dlnr/dofaw/pubs/index.html>.

The deadline for comments to DLNR on the Chevron Hawaii safe harbor proposal is October 22 and to the Service is September 23.

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